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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 18 March 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement by the President of the Republic of Serbia, H.E. Mr. Milan Milutinovic, on the political process in Kosovo and Metohija.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 113 (b) of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIC
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/53/50.

ANNEX

Statement dated 18 March 1998 by the President of the Republic of Serbia on the political process in Kosovo and Metohija

Hesitation with, and the postponement of, the beginning of direct political dialogue between the representatives of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and Albanian political parties in Kosovo and Metohija is unjustified and harmful. It postpones the elimination of tension and blocks the political process of the solution of the questions on which depends the realization of equality of all citizens and the affirmation of peace, tolerance and mutual respect in Kosovo and Metohija.

I call on the leaders of the political parties of the Albanian national minority in Kosovo and Metohija to commence political dialogue without postponement or conditioning. In my capacity of President of the Republic of Serbia, I am ready to be guarantor of such talks on the principle of preserving the territorial integrity and including in the agenda the questions of self-government in Kosovo and Metohija within Serbia.

Political means and a peaceful road are the only ones acceptable for the solution of the problems in Kosovo and Metohija. It is only through dialogue that lasting solutions to all problems can be achieved in which the main point of departure is the realization of the principle of equality of all citizens, including also the equal rights of members of national minorities, in accordance with the highest international standards of the United Nations, OSCE and the Council of Europe.

I emphasize the importance of the continued involvement and presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the realization of humanitarian activities. The competent authorities will guarantee all conditions for its normal work also in the future.

I consider that the international community, in particular the countries of the region, should refrain, pursuant to international standards, from everything that increases tension and encourages separatism or constitutes interference in our internal affairs.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as a European country, is committed to the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Helsinki Document and the Paris Charter and has opted for active participation in contemporary integrative processes. Serbia, within the FR of Yugoslavia, is interested in, and open to, cooperation with OSCE, which implies restoration of membership rights and obligations to our country, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. To that end, cooperation should be renewed with the OSCE mission of longer duration on a contractual basis, similar to the former mission, the work of which in 199[illegible] showed positive results and presented the picture of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija to the international community with greater objectivity.

The education of the young generation is one of the most important existential questions. I therefore invite the 3 + 3 Group to proceed immediately with the implementation of the Agreement on Education Normalization. It will be a stimulus also to the solution of other questions and a successful realization of the rights and interests of all citizens in Kosovo and Metohija.

I emphasize my conviction that the future of the citizens in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as in Serbia and in our entire country, is not in ethnic, religious or cultural self-isolation and divisions, but in peace, equality, interlinkage and common life.

I am confident that all citizens and the responsible political forces of Serbia and our country as a whole support the policy of equality of citizens, preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity and open and equitable cooperation with other countries and the international community.